United Nations A/C.1/55/PV.9

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

First Committee
9th meeting
Monday, 9 October 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

President: U Mya Than ..... (Myanmar)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda items 65 to 81 (*continued*)

General debate on all disarmament and international security items

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, I seize this opportunity, Sir, to congratulate you on your assumption of the chairmanship of this body. I am certain that with your diplomatic skill, as well as your personal expertise on disarmament, this Committee will achieve its objectives. I express my gratitude also to Mr. Dhanapala, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, for his tireless efforts to advance the cause of disarmament within the United Nations.

This year, in an unprecedented session on the eve of the new millennium, our heads of States and Government, by adopting an important communiqué, stressed the increasing interrelationship between international security and disarmament and particularly called for the elimination of nuclear weapons and the reduction of nuclear danger.

This call is itself the manifestation of a universal will to remove the shadow of weapons of mass destruction from our globe. We need at this stage to move toward the realization of this goal through new perceptions and new security doctrines to shape the global and regional security architecture in this new environment.

In this context, the elimination of nuclear weapons, the most inhumane weapons ever invented by human beings and so destructive as to be able to destroy the entire planet many times over, should be among our top priorities. The successful outcome of the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which decided on a general road map for moving towards eliminating nuclear weapons, has created new and fresh optimism that practical steps will be made to achieve this lofty goal of humanity.

With regard to disarmament machinery, the United Nations should accordingly adjust its programme of work to respond to this universal call. The Disarmament Commission fortunately was able to agree this year to start deliberations on nuclear disarmament. This is the first time in the history of the Disarmament Commission that this Commission has started to deliberate on this key issue in its broad context. The Commission had a good start this year, and we hope that the deliberations in the next two years will contribute substantively to advancing nuclear disarmament.

The Conference on Disarmament, as the sole multilateral disarmament negotiating forum, is expected to follow suit and commence negotiations on nuclear disarmament, as well as on banning fissile materials for weapon purposes, as decided by the 2000 NPT Conference.

The international community is, in fact, disappointed at the prevailing situation in the

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Conference on Disarmament, and it expects that every effort will be made to revitalize that important forum. We should all work hard to overcome the existing stalemate and set the stage for the Conference to agree on its programme of work at the beginning of its new annual session next January. As a member of that body, my country is ready to play its role to achieve that objective.

Universality in the membership of the NPT is another integral part of the process to achieve a nuclear-weapon-free world. This issue is of particular concern for the States of the Middle East. Today, all parties in the region except Israel have adhered to the NPT, and all nuclear facilities in the region except those in Israel have been placed under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) full-scope safeguards. By calling on Israel by name to accede to the Treaty and place all its nuclear facilities and its programme under IAEA full-scope safeguards, all States parties to the NPT have now acknowledged, more clearly than ever before, the existence of such a real threat in the region. We hope that this development will contribute to the realization of the establishment of a zone free from nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, something that is supported by 26 years of General Assembly resolutions.

The NPT final document also envisaged a set of temporary measures to be taken and necessary steps to be made until nuclear weapons are destroyed under effective international control. Negative security assurances are among the important objectives that have been on the agenda for a long time, even before the adoption of the NPT itself in 1968. Unfortunately, the discussions towards formulating such arrangements have been limited to basic definitions and general modalities for the submission of such assurances, which, due to the different status of countries concerned, have not been conclusive and remain highly controversial. The States parties to the NPT recently approached this issue afresh, and there is now optimism that such arrangements will be positively addressed within the context of the NPT. It has now been agreed to keep the matter under serious consideration, with a view to finding the best mechanism to follow the issue.

In general, the decision of the recent NPT Review Conference to further strengthen the preparatory mechanism for review conferences will provide an important opportunity for us to follow the roadmap and review its implementation during the interval leading to 2005. We should therefore be — and we shall be — vigilant as to the progress made across a wide spectrum of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation discussions, ranging from the implementation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) to further reductions in strategic and tactical nuclear weapons.

Although the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and the Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) have been concluded and the protocol to the BWC is under negotiation in Geneva — something that we are all striving to conclude prior to the next review conference — the lack of universality of those two crucial legal instruments continues to make the legal ban on the use of biological and chemical weapons far from unconditional. The General Assembly should address this concern as it has before, namely, by repeating its strong call to all States to join the BWC and CWC without delay.

Those calls would of course lead to the desired results if they were also accompanied by the determination of States parties to enforce the incentives and disincentives for States parties and non-States parties to both Conventions. The full implementation of the provisions on promoting the transfer to States parties of relevant equipment, material and technology for peaceful purposes, and denying and limiting such transfers to States that are not parties to those instruments would be a key element in moving towards universality. We hope that this issue, as well as its practical and detailed guidelines, will be sincerely and seriously considered at Geneva during the negotiations of the verification protocol to the BWC.

At the same time, the General Assembly should also reaffirm the calls it made in 1996 and 1998 and request again this year of States parties to the 1925 Geneva Protocol that continue to have reservations to the Protocol that they withdraw those reservations. I hereby seize this opportunity to express my appreciation for and to welcome the decision by the Government of Canada to withdraw its reservations to the Protocol, thereby responding in particular to the call by the General Assembly.

Delivery systems to carry weapons of mass destruction is a legitimate concern of the international community. It is wise to conclude that the use of

weapons of mass destruction is highly dependant on an effective delivery system to carry those weapons. The Islamic Republic of Iran submitted a draft resolution last year aimed at having that concern addressed by this world body, which is supposed to discuss and consider issues of great importance to our security. In the first year, the result was rather promising. The draft resolution was adopted with wide-ranging support and without any negative votes having been cast against it. Some Member States have also made substantive contributions by submitting to the Secretary-General written views, as requested by the resolution.

However that result is not satisfactory. The rather high number of abstentions to the resolution, mostly among members of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), illustrates the need to consolidate and promote common understanding on the basic and main thrust of the resolution — a direction towards which we are moving. This year, the draft resolution on missiles will be centred on the idea of establishing a study group within the United Nations to assist the Secretary-General in submitting a comprehensive report on missiles to the General Assembly. We are now more confident that this approach will be positively considered as viable by many countries and as a first practical step to address this issue globally.

Focusing our endeavours to ban weapons of mass destruction should not, of course, distract our attention from the area of conventional arms. The Disarmament Commission has once again this year begun deliberations on this issue. Even more tragic in this field is the illicit traffic in small arms, which has resulted in the eruption of bloody armed conflicts in some regions that claim the lives of hundreds of innocent people every month. International efforts to address this question at the global level have fortunately been received with overwhelming support. The United Nations Conference on small arms to be convened in 2001 is expected to substantially address some practical measures to prevent this tragedy from continuing. The preparatory phase of our work, to take place in the coming two sessions, will be a crucial part of this process and should prepare the necessary substantive and organizational ground, including the draft plan of action for consideration and adoption by the Conference.

It is promising that we have ample time to address this question in meetings dedicated to the issue, including during the informal consultations of the Preparatory Committee, which are being held in parallel with the First Committee. I hope that these meetings will help us make progress on at least some procedural aspects of our work, so as to enable the second Preparatory Committee session to concentrate on the substance of our work.

I referred at the beginning of my statement to the interrelationship between disarmament and security. In the same context it is important to note that regional and international measures are complementary aspects of a broader objective: to consolidate and promote security. Today's world no longer consists of fragments of regions separated from each other. Our security is linked. If efforts to promote peace and remove tensions are not pursued vigorously at the regional level, particularly in some of the more sensitive areas, international or global endeavours may not lead to world peace.

The Persian Gulf region is among those areas where the promotion of regional security would contribute to the promotion of international security. Two consecutive extensive wars in the region have created suspicions, which are causing persistent tensions and mistrust in the region. But the countries of the region and the international community cannot afford to let this mistrust lead to a new crisis and confrontation. There is a need, therefore, for the countries of the region to address this fundamental issue and take practical steps to alleviate the concerns.

My country, as the country with the longest Persian Gulf shoreline, has adopted a policy of détente and easing tensions in the region. Easing tensions and mistrust is a vital ingredient for preparing the necessary foundation for adopting a constructive approach towards strengthening peace and security.

Resolutions of this Committee and other relevant United Nations resolutions can provide some basis on which the countries of the Persian Gulf can consider joint efforts to address these concerns. We see increasing interest in the region to move in that direction.

Mr. Hasan (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure at the outset to express to you, Sir, and to your colleagues on the Bureau my delegation's most sincere congratulations on your election. We hope that this year's session of the First Committee will achieve the desired results.

The risks posed to international peace and security have increased since the end of the cold war. The last decade was characterized by an incessant arms race and by foreign aggression, as well as by the occupation of States and the interference in the internal affairs of States, by the politics of hegemony, by violations of the Charter and of the principles of international law, and by inhuman sanctions that robbed peoples of their most rudimentary rights. Unless the international community redoubles its efforts to renounce the use of force in international relations and to achieve security through disarmament, the very survival of humanity will be increasingly threatened. However, the rule of international law could provide a suitable framework for halting the arms race and for making progress in the field of disarmament.

The plight of my country, Iraq, is an example of the disastrous implications of a policy that applies brute force in international relations. I will provide the Committee with some examples. First, the United States of America, in the name of the United Nations, imposed comprehensive sanctions against Iraq in 1990. As the United Nations Children's Fund report published on 12 August 1999 confirms, these sanctions led to the death of half a million children under the age of 5. When you add the one million Iraqis of other ages who were killed, the number exceeds the total number of people who died as a result of the use of weapons of mass destruction throughout the world. This crime continues unabated. Seven thousand Iraqi children fall martyr every month to American neutron bombs that go by the name of "comprehensive sanctions". Recent reports have confirmed that these sanctions flagrantly violate the Charter of the United Nations, international law and international humanitarian law. For example, at its fifty-second session, held in Geneva from 31 July to 18 August 2000, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights circulated a document asserting that the comprehensive sanctions against Iraq constitute an illegitimate act under international humanitarian law and human rights laws. Reports of other humanitarian and legal organizations confirm that the sanctions against Iraq indeed qualify as genocide.

Secondly, the United States of America used excessive military force against Iraq, on the pretext of implementing resolution 678 (1990). The United States dropped more than 100,000 tons of bombs on Iraq. This is equivalent to six or seven atomic bombs of the type that were dropped on Hiroshima. Those bombs destroyed the service and economic infrastructure in Iraq, in accordance with then Secretary of State James Baker's intent to return Iraq to a pre-industrial state, an aim never stipulated in Security Council resolutions.

Thirdly, the United States of America and Britain, in the course of their aggression against Iraq, fired over 1 million shots of depleted uranium — the first time this radiological weapon had been used in wartime. This led to a health crisis and to an environmental catastrophe in Iraq, the consequences of which will affect several generations to come. It also brought suffering to thousands of American and British soldiers through the "Gulf War syndrome". The use of depleted uranium against Iraq constitutes a crime against humanity, and those responsible must be punished. Furthermore, Iraq must be compensated for damages and its environment must be cleaned up to eliminate the consequences of the use of this radiological weapon.

Fourthly, in addition to the urgent need to conclude an international convention banning the production and use of depleted uranium for the purposes of warfare, let me note that the United States of America and Britain have, since 1991, imposed a no-fly zone in northern Iraq, expanded in 1992 to include southern Iraq. The United States of America and Britain have been incessantly bombarding Iraqi territory in a war that has been ongoing since 1991, using force in contravention with the Charter of the United Nations.

Hundreds of people have been martyred and thousands injured by this illegitimate use of force against Iraq. Certain neighbouring States — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Turkey — have collaborated in this aggression by providing air bases for American and British aircraft. They are the principal collaborators and accomplices in the acts of aggression against Iraq, and they should be held responsible under international law for the consequences of these acts of aggression.

Fifthly, the United States of America continues to use the United Nations as a cover for its acts of aggression against Iraq. The United States of America used a subcommission of the Security Council, the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), to spy on Iraq and to provide false reports about its non-compliance with Security Council resolutions.

Because it is necessary to replace an agent when that agent is about to be discovered — be it in a subcommission of the Security Council or elsewhere — the United States of America actually "killed" the Special Commission on 16 December 1998. But this did not prevent the facts from being revealed: the truth about the goal of the Commission, which was to allow American intelligence and Moussad to spy on Iraq, and the fact that the disarmament phase set out in section C of resolution 687 (1991) had been completed.

The chief inspector, Scott Ritter, wrote an article in the June 2000 issue of *Arms Control Today* magazine confirming that the disarmament phase had been completed. The Security Council was supposed to lift the sanctions imposed on Iraq years ago, in accordance with the resolutions of the Security Council itself. But it has not done so, because the goals of the United States are very different from those of the resolutions themselves.

The Zionist forces have, since 28 September 2000, launched a new campaign of repression against the Palestinian people, using tanks, helicopters, missiles and illegal ammunition such as dumdum bullets and cluster bombs. No doubt everyone was shocked by the picture of the child, Mohammed Al-Durra, seeking shelter and protection in his father's arms and screaming in horror. That terrible image would stir compassion in the heart of any human being, but it did not prevent a Zionist soldier from aiming his rifle at that child and firing at him in cold blood. He was then left to die in his father's arms.

That picture is clear testimony of the destructive ability of minds steeped in the culture of hegemony and racism as well as policies of sheer, brutal force and disdain for human beings. It also made clear the real risks posed by the continued possession by the Zionist entity of weapons of mass destruction, foremost among which are nuclear weapons.

The Israeli nuclear-weapons programme is not subject to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) regime. Israel's refusal to accede to the NPT poses a real threat to regional and international security. It compromises the credibility of the NPT. The fact that this *fait accompli* is being perpetuated by compelling the states of the region to adhere to the NPT regime while applying a different standard to the Zionist entity creates an imbalance that threatens Arab security. This is untenable. It is unfair that the Arab States should be compelled to remain *ad infinitum* members of a treaty that gives them no assurances against Israeli nuclear weapons.

Israel, with the help of the United States of America, continues to develop its nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction vertically and horizontally, without any international control.

My statement has focused on Iraq and occupied Palestine as examples of what takes place in certain parts of the world as a result of the hegemony of the United States and its policies of force, and of how one unipolar Power seeks to ride roughshod over the law. This confirms the fact that the world today is far from being just, secure or peaceful.

We must confront the challenges on two interconnected tracks. The first involves strict commitment to the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law and the promotion of international machinery for the rule of law in a way that prevents unilateral military acts or threats against the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of States. The second track involves building on what has been achieved in the field of disarmament, proceeding from the strategy adopted by the General Assembly at its tenth special session in 1978, in particular the priority given to nuclear disarmament.

Mr. Alemán (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I should like to extend to you, Mr. Chairman, my delegation's congratulations on your well-deserved election to the chairmanship of our Committee. Through you, I should also like to ask you to convey our congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. You can count on the cooperation of my delegation as you carry out your important work. I should also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs for his invaluable introductory statement.

The encouraging trends that seemed to be emerging at the end of the cold war, which suggested that international society would evolve towards broader forms of cooperation and the establishment of an era of worldwide peace and security, have been reversed by the increase in the number of not only international, but domestic, conflicts, in which women and children are the principal victims and suffer most from their effects. Fresh approaches or updated versions of strategic defence doctrines are increasing international insecurity, and the use or threat of force may prejudice

the elements of the San Francisco Charter relating to international collective action. Faced with these developments, this year the United Nations has been promoting a number of far-reaching measures relating to international disarmament and security that will enable us to consider with renewed optimism the disarmament goals agreed to within this Organization.

In this context, I should like in particular to highlight the auspicious outcome of the latest Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in which the nuclear-weapon States reaffirmed their absolute commitment to proceed to the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

Furthermore, we have succeeded in fulfilling the long-standing aspirations of the international community in this area. Thus, the NPT Review Conference also agreed upon the need for negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on a non-discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty banning the production of fissile material for nuclear weapons; on the need to establish within the Conference on Disarmament a subsidiary body with a clear mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament; and on the need to sign and ratify, without further delay or conditions, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

The delegation of Ecuador, as a member of the Conference on Disarmament, will push for compliance with those commitments in that forum. It is essential that the few countries remaining outside the NPT finally adhere to this multilateral treaty so as to ensure its universality. In the same vein, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty must be ratified at an early date, particularly by the 44 countries whose ratification is necessary for it to enter into force as an international instrument.

Ecuador has always supported efforts to bring about nuclear disarmament. That is why we have been a party to the NPT since its inception, and actively participated in elaborating the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which declared Latin America to be a nuclear-weapon-free zone. In 1999 we had the honour of coordinating the Disarmament Commission working group that established the guidelines for the creation of internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of agreements freely entered into by the States of the region concerned. My delegation believes that such areas strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and contribute to the attainment of nuclear disarmament.

In this context, we are encouraged by the creation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones, which, together with those established by the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba, will make it possible to eliminate the nuclear threat from the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas.

As in the past, my delegation would like to stress the importance of the 1996 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice, which remains in force. We believe that all States should proceed to work on the negotiation of an international legally binding instrument to prohibit the development, production, testing, deployment, stockpiling, transfer, threat or use of nuclear weapons, which, in the final analysis, would mean their elimination, in line with repeated declarations to this effect in the General Assembly. To that end, Ecuador supports the convening of an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers, in accordance with the Millennium Declaration recently adopted by our heads of State or Government.

My delegation would like to alert the Committee to the risk of modifying the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty through unilateral measures that might break the fragile strategic equilibrium between the signatory countries. A new arms race could have unpredictable consequences that would affect not only the Powers that are parties to those Treaties, but the entire international community, with major, grave repercussions on global stability and security. We welcome, by contrast, the adoption, at the beginning of this year, by the Russian Federation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the START II agreement, and we encourage the Powers concerned to begin negotiation of START III as soon as possible.

Actions in the nuclear disarmament arena must be accompanied by tangible measures in the area of conventional arms. In this connection, the analysis carried out by the Working Group of the Disarmament Commission this year, intelligently presided over by the delegation of Argentina and responsible for devising practical measures for confidence-building in this arena, has merited my delegation's special interest, because it considers that there will be many

opportunities at future Commission meetings to establish parameters and recommendations on such an important issue. In that connection, Ecuador submitted to the Secretary-General information related to the transfer of arms for 1999, which has been circulated at this session in document A/55/272.

Residual effects of regional conflicts and of the tension that marked the cold war have led to an unprecedented increase in the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, whose intended recipients are mainly developing countries. Traffic in conventional small arms and light weapons, which had been declining until 1998, has, according to the data gathered in the Secretary-General's report, increased for the first time in the last decade. It has risen to roughly $780 billion, which is equivalent to 2.6 per cent of the world's gross national product.

That trade fuels insecurity and has profound social ramifications that must be addressed. My delegation believes that in order to put an end to this escalation of the arms race, Governments must shoulder greater responsibility in connection with the production, use, marketing and export of this type of weapon, whose major clients are drug traffickers and guerrillas. These activities should be firmly condemned by the international community, not only because of their harmful and destabilizing effects, but also because of their characteristic tendency to spread. The conceptual strides that have been made in this area within the United Nations are a major contribution towards the international Conference to be held next year.

In another area, I wish to mention the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on their Destruction. Ecuador participated actively in the negotiating process leading to the Convention in the certainty that its implementation would prove beneficial to international peace and security. To that end, it has established a specialized demining centre on its territory, designed to provide humanitarian assistance to victims, improve the structure of demining tasks, coordinate the work of the various groups related to this issue and try to obtain and use international assistance in the best way possible. The total and final elimination of anti-personnel landmines is a priority goal for Ecuador.

To that end, among other actions, it has signed an agreement of cooperation with the Organization of American States, in which it has invited United Nations services involved in mine action to participate, taking advantage of the resources available provided by the international community, particularly by Japan; we appreciate this cooperation and hope it will be translated into reality as soon as possible.

Similarly, my country has communicated to the United Nations Secretariat, in accordance with article 7 of the Ottawa Convention, the existing situation with regard to anti-personnel mines in our country. It has also transmitted a list of Ecuadorian experts in this area that could cooperate with similar efforts where that might be necessary.

To that end, on 7 June 2000, the Government of Ecuador issued the ratification decree relating to the Protocol on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Mines, Booby Traps and Other Devices, Protocol II, as amended on 3 May 1996 and annexed to the Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons Which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or To Have Indiscriminate Effects.

At the beginning of my statement, I mentioned the contradiction presented by the new increase in arms acquisition expenditures during 1999 to the detriment of economic and social development. My delegation trusts that all countries will reconsider this fact and will decide to free up at least part of the enormous resources now being dumped into the arms race spiral for improvement in the living conditions of all peoples and particularly in developing countries, which, in the final analysis, would be the best contribution that could be made to secure an international society that is more just, peaceful and secure.

Finally, the delegation of Ecuador wishes to highlight the important work being done by the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, based in Lima, and we join other delegations' appeals for the international community to work and cooperate with the Centre's various programmes.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): On behalf of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, I congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the Committee. I am sure that the Committee will achieve

successes under your able guidance. My congratulations also go to the members of the Bureau on their election.

Humankind in the twentieth century aspired to live in a peaceful and safe world, while experiencing the scourge of hot wars unprecedented in its history. The end of the cold war triggered much hope for peace. The peoples of the world had expectations that they would be able to achieve sustainable development and create happy lives in a new environment. Much was also preached about the advent of an era of peace and prosperity with the end of cold war.

But what is the real picture of our planet entering a new century? Enormous challenges to peace and development continue to lie before mankind.

Hostile relations between countries remain as they are and the concept of confrontation is alive. Non-existent threats are created and enemy States are artificially made. One hears much about the need to develop new weapon systems, and military alliances are strengthened in the name of defence.

The intention to maintain nuclear weapons is unchanged, and the demand for the elimination of nuclear weapons is marginalized by skewed nuclear non-proliferation.

The plan to build national missile defences and theatre missile defence systems continues to be pursued under the pretext of the need to intercept missile attacks from any direction. National missile defences and theatre missile defence systems are, in essence, aimed at dominating the world by power superiority, since they are based on power politics and the theory of nuclear dominance.

In Asia, the attempt by Japan — a defeated country — to attain military power and nuclear armaments is being overlooked.

All this shows that power politics and the continuing cold-war way of thinking are the most serious challenges faced by the international community today. The cold-war way of thinking gives rise to power politics, which constitutes the main obstacle to disarmament, in particular to nuclear disarmament, peace and security. That is also the main factor threatening the principle of respect for sovereignty and hampering the development of friendly and equal relations among nations, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter.

Disarmament cannot be realized solely through the efforts of one side, and peace is not for the benefit of one side alone. Peace and security cannot be expected as long as strong countries oppress weak countries by force. Where there is oppression, there is reaction. The world in the twenty-first century will never be peaceful and stable as long as cold-war attempts to attain power superiority and dominate the world continue.

The United Nations should convert global nuclear disarmament into a United Nations process. Given the Secretary-General's proposal to convene an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers and the demand by a large number of Member States for the holding of a special session on disarmament, it is our hope that agreement on convening the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament will be reached as soon as possible.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will always strive to bring about peace and security on the planet, in close collaboration with Member States. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea values and desires stable peace and security more than anyone else, as it is geographically surrounded by big countries and has lived divided and under an armistice for several decades. Through our steadfast adherence to a peace-loving and independent policy we have been able to prevent the danger of war and to defend peace on the Korean peninsula in the face of unprecedented hostile attempts against our country in recent years by coalition forces.

The respected General Kim Jong Il has maintained an army-first policy as a reflection of the reality facing our country, and leads our people in defending the country and promoting economic development, thereby firmly uniting the entire people with the army as its pillar. As a result of the army-first policy of the respected General Kim Jong Il, the arduous ordeal facing our country has been overcome and a solid foundation has been laid for the building of a strong and prosperous nation.

In June of this year, a summit meeting between North and South of Korea was held in Pyongyang and a joint declaration was issued. The summit meeting and the resulting joint declaration mark a historic milestone that represents a turning point towards achieving the independent reunification of our nation. Today, North-

South ministerial talks and other contacts and dialogues are being conducted in implementation of the joint declaration, and a positive atmosphere for peace and reunification is being created. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea will further contribute to peace in Asia and the rest of the world by bringing about peace and reunification in Korea as soon as possible through the implementation of the North-South joint declaration.

In order to achieve stable peace and security in Korea and Asia, it is imperative to eliminate hostile relations and to withdraw foreign troops from the region. We hope that the United Nations and its members will encourage an early implementation of the North-South joint declaration so as to promote peace and reunification in Korea and do what should be done on the basis of fairness and reality.

Before concluding my statement, I wish to make clear once again our position on the nuclear issue, which has been raised by some countries in this Committee. The nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula is between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the United States of America, and it will be resolved through the implementation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea-United States Agreed Framework. In order to solve the issue, it would therefore be helpful to call for the implementation of the Agreed Framework.

We regret that old ways of thinking continue to exist. We cannot but be deeply concerned over words and deeds that hinder the establishment of an atmosphere of reconciliation and cooperation on the Korean peninsula.

Japan should clarify its position and give up its attempt to gain nuclear armaments, rather than try to poke its nose into other peoples' issues. We urge Japan to take the road to genuine peace.

Mr. Al-Khal (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the State of Qatar, I have the pleasure to extend to you, Mr. Chairman, our sincere congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee. I am confident that your diplomatic experience and skills will lead to the success of our deliberations. We would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau. We hope all delegations will work in the interest of world peace and security.

The Millennium Summit was an important and historic opportunity to take stock of the achievements and failures of the past, especially those that have taken place since the end of the cold war. It was also an opportunity to benefit from these events in order to prepare for the challenges of the future. The purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter, the Summit Declaration and the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century provide guidance to the international community in confronting the urgent challenges and problems we all face in various areas of life.

Among the most serious challenges that present stumbling blocks to the fulfilment of peoples' aspirations to live in peace and security are the conventional arms race and the danger posed by the spread of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction throughout the world. We believe that the international community would now do well by examining objectively the concept of international peace and security, as well as the ways and means to maintain them. The world community should adopt a wider concept of international peace and security, not only by identifying the direct causes of war, disputes and tension, but also by understanding the underlying causes of problems in order to ensure early prevention and thus maintain peace and security. The United Nations must always be the central forum for addressing and resolving those disputes.

As we stand at the threshold of the third millennium, we must ask ourselves whether we are really ready to save future generations from the horrors of wars and bloody conflicts, such as the ones that have taken place during the last century, both within and among countries. Unfortunately, the arms race and the proliferation of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction, the relentless drive to upgrade nuclear arsenals and programmes and to keep some of those programmes outside the safeguards system established by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the failure to heed the repeated calls of the international community to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and to place nuclear installations under IAEA safeguards, and the enormous amount of nuclear waste resulting from the development and stockpiling of nuclear weapons all haunt the collective consciousness of mankind and

threaten peace and security in both nuclear and non-nuclear-weapon States.

We note that Ambassador Petko Draganov, President of the Conference on Disarmament, in his introduction to its report (A/55/27) for the year 2000, indicated that global negotiations on disarmament remained deadlocked. In order to break the current impasse, the United Nations, with all its disarmament mechanisms, has a most relevant and legitimate role to play at the present time. The State of Qatar feels that the elimination of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction remains an inescapable necessity.

The State of Qatar, having acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the Chemical Weapons Convention, believes that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East would be a further effective contribution to reinforcing regional security, by halting increasing risks and threats to security. The establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East would be a key confidence-building measure in the effort to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

The first of the series of General Assembly resolutions entitled "Establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region of the Middle East" was adopted in 1974. Since 1980 the General Assembly has been adopting a resolution on this subject by consensus, and the concept has always been supported in bilateral declarations by the countries of the region and by many international forums.

The Middle East region is now subject to the threat of the use of nuclear weapons, which are possessed by only one State: Israel. There is clearly a dangerous imbalance and great disparity in the Middle East, due to the fact that all the Arab States have acceded to the NPT and comply with its provisions, while Israel has not acceded to this Treaty, and has refused to sign it, and to place its nuclear reactors and installations under the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards system. Israel persistently refuses to heed calls by the international community to free the region of nuclear weapons. Furthermore, Israel continues to bury its nuclear wastes in occupied Arab territories and to develop all other kinds of weapons of mass destruction, including biological and chemical weapons. It does so under a cloak of silence, because of a policy of double standards pursued by major Powers.

If we want to build a better and safer world, a world based on justice and peace, we must put an end to the ongoing, intense arms race and discourage the acquisition and production of weapons of mass destruction. The lethal weapons possessed by Israel constitute a constant and grave danger, threatening the peoples of the Middle East and neighbouring countries. Unless these destructive weapons are eliminated as quickly as possible, the efforts of the international community to curb their spread will certainly fail.

It is plainly logical, in a vast and critical area like the Middle East, to avoid giving an exemption to any country or to treat any country in a discriminatory fashion. Plain common sense calls for putting an end to the exception given to Israel and for insisting that Israel accede to the NPT.

In this vein, we pay tribute to and welcome the sound and courageous decision by the Government of Mongolia to declare its territory free from nuclear weapons, in accordance with the NPT. We also pay tribute to the statement made to the First Committee by Mr. Holum, United States Under-Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Security, on behalf of the five permanent members of the Security Council. This statement welcomed Mongolia's declaring itself a nuclear-weapon-free territory and made a commitment to take all necessary measures to support Mongolia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. Mongolia's positive action in becoming a nuclear-weapon-free country — in order to establish peaceful, amicable and mutually beneficial relations with all countries of the region and with other countries, under the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations — is a good example that could be emulated in the Middle East. In this way, the Middle East could become a nuclear-weapon-free zone and it would be possible to build a better and safer world, a world based on peace and justice and anchored in international law; human dignity could be preserved; a free and dignified life for mankind could be assured; and all resources could be channelled into the promotion of economic and social development.

Mr. Gouveia (Mozambique): My Ambassador would have liked to participate in this debate, but unfortunately, because of another commitment, he

could not come, so I shall read this statement on his behalf.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to serve as Chairman. We are confident that with your expertise and broad diplomatic experience you will successfully conduct the Committee's work. I would like also to extend my delegation's congratulations to the other members of the Bureau. My delegation assures you all of its full support and cooperation as you discharge your important responsibilities.

The First Committee is meeting this year against the backdrop of the historic Millennium Summit, at which world leaders met to chart the future of humanity, particularly the role of the United Nations, as we enter the twenty-first century. The Millennium Summit debated the vital issues relating to the maintenance of peace, security and disarmament.

Positive developments were noted and are worth mentioning. These include the entry into force of the Ottawa Convention banning anti-personnel landmines and the Chemical Weapons Convention; the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT); the successful outcome of the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT); the advancement of nuclear-weapon-free zones, which now cover the entire southern hemisphere; the strengthening of nuclear safeguards; and sharp decreases in nuclear weapons stockpiles and world military expenditures.

Nevertheless, the world still faces some serious threats deriving from the indiscriminate use of small arms and light weapons, and from nuclear and biological weapons. We remain deeply concerned about the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, the continuation of nuclear testing, the refusal of key States to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and the threat posed by biological weapons. We ask the international community to do its utmost to address this situation.

At the Millennium Summit our leaders committed themselves to spare no effort to free our peoples from the scourge of war, whether within or between States, and to seek to eliminate the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. This commitment, clearly stated in the Millennium Declaration, gives us the responsibility to engage in a vigorous debate to generate the necessary political will to free humanity from the threat of weapons. We believe this should be our priority task in the First Committee.

Our first major concern is the persistence of weapons of mass destruction in the world. These weapons, a legacy of the cold-war period, might have been important at that time. But, as the Secretary-General rightly pointed out in his millennium report, whatever rationale they may once have had has long since dwindled. To our great disappointment, our world still harbours some 35,000 nuclear weapons.

At the NPT Review Conference, the nuclear-weapon States agreed to achieve the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to nuclear disarmament. For the first time in 15 years, States parties were able to reach a historic consensus on several issues crucial to the security of humanity. With this breakthrough, the NPT has planted the seeds of hope, and we believe that the question of nuclear proliferation is close to a final resolution.

The NPT also establishes an international standard. No longer will States parties be allowed to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons with impunity. We sincerely hope that the outcome of the NPT Review Conference will be implemented without delay through the adoption of practical steps to advance systematically and progressively towards nuclear disarmament. Our call is simple and clear: free the world from weapons of mass destruction.

The other issue of great concern to my delegation is the question of landmines. These weapons continue to kill, maim and threaten the lives of innocent people in many countries of the world, including my own. The entry into force of the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction has demonstrated the determination of the international community to free the world of these deadly weapons. The Ottawa Convention has been fundamental in placing the issue of landmines on the international agenda and has helped to mobilize international cooperation and collective efforts to combat these dangerous devices.

The Second Meeting of the States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, held recently in Geneva, reaffirmed our unwavering commitment to the total eradication of anti-personnel landmines and to

addressing the insidious and inhumane effects of these weapons.

We are pleased to observe that since the entry into force of this Convention, the number of States parties has been growing steadily, which shows the vitality of this legal instrument. However, we must underscore that we are still far from our ultimate objective of universalization of the Convention. Only if we achieve this objective can we ensure a total and complete ban on the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of landmines. I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to all States that are not yet parties to adhere to the Convention.

I would also like to draw the attention of the Committee to the draft resolution on the implementation of the Ottawa Convention that will be presented jointly by Mozambique, Nicaragua and Norway.

The illicit trafficking in and proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses a serious threat to world peace and security. These weapons are now being used nearly all over the world, and they have been the primary cause of death for many women, children and elderly persons. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is not merely a security problem. These weapons are easy to obtain and are a source of social and political tension; they fuel armed conflicts; they threaten legitimate Governments; and they are increasingly used by terrorists and organized crime. Ultimately, the indiscriminate use of small arms and light weapons has a negative impact on the economy of affected countries.

During the Millennium Summit, our leaders committed themselves to take concerted action to end illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons, especially by making arms transfers more transparent and by supporting regional disarmament measures.

In this regard, we would like to encourage the active participation of all Member States in the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, to be held in 2001.

The international community should not sit by idly while our fellow citizens are endangered by the 500 million small arms and light weapons estimated to be in circulation. It is imperative that we seriously negotiate an international framework to curb illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. We believe that the final documents of the Conference will provide this global framework for concerted action by the international community.

We remain deeply concerned at the lack of progress in the multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament and at the continued risk imposed on humanity. The CTBT has not entered into force, because certain nuclear-weapon States have not ratified it. The negotiations on biological weapons are moving at a slow pace. We are far from the conclusion of negotiations to ban the production of fissile material. No substantive progress has been achieved in establishing new nuclear-weapon-free zones.

The Conference on Disarmament recently held in Geneva did not reach a consensus regarding its programme of work, particularly as concerns the establishment of a subsidiary body to deal with nuclear disarmament. It is imperative that the nuclear-weapon States reaffirm their political commitment to nuclear disarmament. This commitment should be immediately supplemented by practical disarmament. Only then can humanity enjoy a world free of nuclear weapons.

Let me conclude my remarks by reiterating our commitment to a world free of dangerous weapons. We dream of the day when our planet will be free of the scourge of those weapons, making it possible for humanity to engage in the process of socio-economic development in peace. That is our dream. Let us work together to make it come true.

Mr. Castellón Duarte (Nicaragua) *(spoke in Spanish)*: I should like at the outset, Sir, to express, on behalf of my delegation, my warmest congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Committee at this session. I am convinced that thanks to your experience in the disarmament field and your well-known diplomatic skills, you will guide our work most efficiently. We offer you the support of our delegation in this undertaking.

My delegation also welcomes the high calibre of the various reports submitted by the Secretariat on the items before us for discussion. Their wealth of content is making the work of our Committee easier.

Genuine progress in arms control and disarmament negotiations is still far from a reality, even though we have recently noted some advances. We are alarmed at the level of arms expenditures. The

Secretary-General, in his report on the work of the Organization, pointed out that in 1999 annual military expenditures rose for the first time in the post-cold-war period, with total expenditures reaching approximately $780 billion, which is equivalent to 2.6 per cent of the world's gross national product.

On the other hand, one of the elements of the progress we referred to earlier became a reality at the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), held in April and May of this year. Among its conclusions was the reaffirmation of the conviction that the full and effective implementation of the Treaty and the non-proliferation regime in all its aspects play a vital role in the promotion of international peace and security.

Strict compliance with the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is vital to the maintenance of global security and will make it possible for us progressively and systematically to move forward towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

A further step towards disarmament, which we appreciate, was the ratification by the Russian Federation of the second strategic arms reduction Treaty (START II).

As a State party to the Treaty of Tlatelolco, we support the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all regions of the world. The establishment of these zones clearly contributes to the promotion of international peace and security. The consolidation of such regimes must be promoted.

My delegation would like to express its satisfaction with and support for the convening, in 2001, of the Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, which we consider to be an important means of encouraging a global approach to the problem of the proliferation of such weapons. The attainment of meaningful goals will require not only the participation of Governments, but also the involvement of civil society and the private sector. This issue has been accorded particular importance by my Government, given the fact that these weapons have characteristics that make them the weapons of choice in internal conflicts and acts undertaken by terrorist groups, insurgent forces, drug traffickers and irregular troops, whose principal victims are always defenceless civilians. Among the steps that we in Nicaragua have taken, with relative success, since the end of the civil war, is the purchase and destruction of weapons, the bartering of weapons for consumer goods and, of course, their destruction, and education to promote peace, reconciliation and democracy, particularly in those communities where former combatants from opposing sides live.

It is sometimes more difficult to overcome hatred in civil wars than in international wars, given the fact that after armed conflict, the former fighters from different groups have to live side-by-side in the same national territory. The persistent mutual distrust must be overcome through education.

As the Millennium Declaration stated, it is also important, in order to end the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons, for States to take concerted action to make arms transfers more transparent and to support regional disarmament measures.

The situation with regard to anti-personnel landmines throughout the world is worth a separate section in our statement. Important progress has been made in recent years. The number of deaths caused by such weapons has declined in the countries hit hardest by this scourge. The production of anti-personnel landmines has declined significantly. The Ottawa Convention has played a fundamental role in this positive trend. It has broken a record with regard to ratification, with more than 100 States currently being parties thereto. Notwithstanding this progress, a great many challenges remain to be overcome in the area of anti-personnel landmines, and it is the countries that are most afflicted by these terrible weapons where we must make the greatest efforts, given the large number of such mines in those territories and the dearth of resources to continue to deal with the problem.

One of the major problems in this connection is the number of victims of such explosions, particularly women and children, who require rehabilitation and need to be reintegrated into society so that they can live lives of dignity. It is equally important to make people aware of the harm that mines can cause and to make it possible for demining to begin or continue.

In April 1999, the armed forces of Nicaragua began a programme to destroy the mines in our arsenal. To date, we have destroyed more than 30,000 stockpiled mines. We have already destroyed about 60,000 mines in various parts of Nicaragua, which represents 44 per cent compliance. I should like to point out that the destruction programme for mines in

the ground will conclude in 2004. On our northern border, we have made progress in agricultural areas. We have undertaken a large-scale effort to ensure that the coffee producers, among others, can harvest their crops with greater security in areas where they could not go before. This has made it possible to increase production.

We have scheduled the destruction of all of the stockpiled mines in our country by September 2001 — the month during which we will be holding in Nicaragua the third meeting of the States parties to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Nicaragua was chosen as the venue of this meeting at the second meeting of the States parties of the convention in Geneva from 11 to 15 September 2000.

Nicaragua is being assisted in its demining task mainly by the Governments of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Canada, Brazil, Argentina and the United States, in the context of the programme developed by the Organization of American States.

Before concluding, I should like to highlight the work done by our Government to reduce the size of our armed forces. By the beginning of 2000, the number of soldiers, which formerly stood at about 100,000, had been reduced to 14,000, which has made it possible for us to undertake social development projects aimed in particular at helping the victims of anti-personnel landmines and to increase training for the special explosive ordnance disposal forces in our demining programme.

Mr. Adekanye (Nigeria): I wish to express, on behalf of the delegation of Nigeria, our congratulations to the Chairman on his unanimous election to preside over the deliberations of this Committee. We are confident that, with his diplomatic skill, the Committee's work will be steered to a successful conclusion. We also convey our felicitations to other members of the Bureau.

Our delegation also extends its appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Dhanapala, for his important statement at the opening of our debate.

The disarmament and security challenges that we face today have not diminished. The nuclear-weapon States still have in their arsenals some 30,000 nuclear weapons. The existence of these weapons and the inherent threat that they pose to humanity remind us all that the achievement of the goal of a nuclear-free world constitutes one of the major challenges of the twenty-first century. Undoubtedly, some significant progress was made through bilateral agreements in reducing nuclear arsenals. We welcome the decision of the United States to postpone the deployment of a national missile defence system. This decision has created a window of opportunity to address the concern of the international community. In the same vein, our delegation wishes to express its appreciation for the ratification of START II by the Russian Federation in April of this year. The entry into force of that Treaty should also provide an incentive to commence further negotiations on strategic arms reduction.

We believe that the bilateral arms reduction process should not be allowed to falter. Rather, it should reflect a shared commitment to a continuing decline in the number of nuclear weapons. However, such a process should complement multilateral negotiations in which all countries have a stake. Let us exploit the new-found unity of purpose exhibited at the Millennium Summit to undertake, in good faith, multilateral negotiations on nuclear disarmament, the prevention of an arms race in outer space and the fissile material treaty.

It had been the expectation of Nigeria that the outcome of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference would significantly advance the goal of the elimination of nuclear weapons. We therefore took seriously the commitments made on that occasion by the nuclear-weapon States to comply with the decisions on the principles and objectives for non-proliferation and disarmament as they relate to article VI of the Treaty. Five years after that Conference, those commitments were again reiterated last May. We believe these commitments, as well as other important decisions reached at the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), if implemented, should strengthen confidence in the NPT. There should also be a new political will to negotiate an unambiguous legally binding instrument that will assure the non-nuclear-weapon States against nuclear attack.

The Chemical and Biological Weapons Conventions, to which Nigeria is a party, reflect our support for disarmament and international peace and security. We in Nigeria have set up the machinery to

ensure compliance with our obligations, including a reporting system under the Chemical Weapons Convention. It is essential to enhance international cooperation in the transfer of technology, material and equipment for peaceful purposes in the chemical and allied fields, as envisaged under the Convention.

On 8 September 2000, President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria signed the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) in the course of the Millennium Summit here in New York. This represents an earnest example of Nigeria's irrevocable commitment to a nuclear-free world. Already the necessary constitutional processes have been set in motion for its early ratification by the Nigerian Senate. We are pleased to observe that this is taking place under a civilian Administration which is resolved to confront the new security challenges facing mankind. Efforts in achieving these goals will come to nought unless Member States, particularly those whose ratification is essential to the Treaty's entry into force, summon the political will to join us.

We believe that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones is an important disarmament measure that promotes regional peace and security in our world. The existence of the African Nuclear-Weapons-Free Zone Treaty, the Treaty of Pelindaba, reflects the resolve of the countries in the African region to achieve that goal. We believe that our country's ratification of the Treaty, already set in motion, would enhance the prospects of its coming into force.

We welcome the strides being made to create a similar nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia. It is our hope that other Member States will join in these efforts by removing the present obstacles to the creation of similar zones in their regions.

Nigeria shares the concerns of the international community that the easy availability of small arms and light weapons escalates conflicts and undermines political stability. In emphasizing the link between small arms and conflicts, the United Nations Secretary-General stated that the proliferation of small arms will be one of the key challenges in preventing conflicts in the new century.

We have several opportunities to respond to the challenges posed by the scourge of these weapons. One such opportunity at the global level is the forthcoming United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, scheduled for 2001. The success of that Conference will be judged, inter alia, by the adoption of a concrete and achievable international action programme, as well as follow-up actions. Elements of such a programme should include increased transparency, accountability, an international code of conduct, enhanced national export and import controls, information exchange, marking and tracing, international cooperation and assistance and practical disarmament measures, such as demobilization and weapons collection and destruction in post-conflict situations.

Various regional and subregional initiatives and experiences in combating the illicit trafficking in and the manufacture of small arms have provided the international community with the necessary basis to reach agreement on an action programme at the 2001 United Nations Conference. I refer in particular to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Moratorium on the Importation, Exportation and Manufacture of Small Arms and Light Weapons in West Africa. This Moratorium is the first major initiative of its kind in the world and has several unique features with far-reaching implications for the mandate of the 2001 United Nations Conference.

The Nigerian delegation will this year again sponsor, as it has done in the past, a draft resolution on the United Nations Disarmament Fellowship Programme. Since the programme was initiated in 1978, the number of beneficiaries under the programme has continued to grow. We commend the Member States which have provided, and continue to provide, resources and facilities for participants. We are equally grateful to the Secretary-General for the diligence with which the Organization has implemented the Programme over the years. It is our hope that Member States will support the draft resolution on the Programme when presented.

In his report on the Organization, the Secretary-General emphasized that disarmament remained a critical element of the United Nations strategy for peace and security. The Organization therefore occupies a unique place in increasing awareness of these issues. Hence the need to revitalize and strengthen the various regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament, including the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Lomé, Togo, established to promote dialogue and mutual understanding among Member States.

At the conclusion of the Millennium Summit last month, world leaders had affirmed their commitment, inter alia,

> "To strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open for achieving this aim, including the possibility of convening an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers". (*United Nations Millennium Declaration, para. 9*)

Let us seize this opportunity to translate the commitment of our leaders into action by supporting the convening of an international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers.

As President Olusegun Obasanjo said at the Millennium Summit,

> "We are at a new dawn; what it portends we cannot say. But this much we owe to ourselves and to succeeding generations: a world where all nations, all races and all peoples can live in dignity and in peace with one another." (*A/55/PV.7, p .13*)

Mrs. Quarless (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 14 States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are members of the United Nations.

I convey our congratulations to you, Mr. Chairman, and to the members of the Bureau on your election. I assure you of the full cooperation of our delegations as we address the important work of the First Committee. I also take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Jayantha Dhanapala, and to the staff of his Department for their continued stewardship.

This year will be remembered for the significant events that infused new spirit in the dialogue on the maintenance of international peace and security and renewed the collective commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. The Declaration adopted by the Millennium Summit makes a strong call for concerted action towards eliminating weapons of mass destruction; towards ending the illicit traffic in small arms and light weapons; and towards eliminating the danger posed by landmines. Most significant, however, was the outcome of the Sixth Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which, among its achievements, secured an important undertaking from the nuclear-weapon States for the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals. Emerging from a record of stalled negotiations and unfulfilled commitments, that indication of intent was indeed very welcome. We may now look forward to seeing words transformed into demonstrable action, for there is still much to be done.

The particular concern of the CARICOM States remains the unrelenting flow of the illegal traffic in small arms, which contributes significantly to the escalation and perpetuation of violence, not only in conflict and post-conflict areas, but also in stable democracies such as our own. In the Caribbean the traffic in illicit arms, fuelled mainly by the illegal drug trade, continues unabated, undermining the security of our region and destroying the social fabric of our communities. The proliferation of small arms in our societies is taking its toll not only on human life, but on our development prospects. Concerted international action is urgently needed.

We therefore look forward to a meaningful outcome from next year's first International Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects. We continue to hope that it will address decisively the establishment of a comprehensive legal framework defining national, regional and international measures to curb the illegal traffic in these arms. To that end, we encourage more constructive dialogue in the coming meetings of the Preparatory Committee, with a view to our reaching agreement on the scope and objective of the Conference.

In the meantime, we welcome initiatives that assist our Governments to better understand and control this problem. The activities of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean are worthy of special mention. The CARICOM States are greatly encouraged by the programme of work undertaken by the Centre since its revitalization, particularly the seminars, workshops and other activities aimed at strengthening national and regional efforts to control the illegal flow of firearms. We applaud its Director on establishing a cooperative programme with other regional entities, notably the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD). Such collaboration promotes the most efficient use of resources and the sharing of knowledge

and expertise among agencies with similar regional scope.

The relationship with CICAD we consider a particularly useful one, since the Organization of American States has been at the forefront of the battle against the illegal traffic in small arms in the region, with the adoption of the Inter-American Convention against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition, Explosives and Other Related Materials. CARICOM States participated in the Centre's workshop in Martinique this year to promote greater understanding of CICAD's model regulations for the control of the international movement of firearms. We look forward to participating more fully in the activities in the coming year, and we encourage increased voluntary contributions in support of the valuable work of the Centre.

The CARICOM States note with satisfaction the progress achieved in the decreased production of anti-personnel landmines, in the destruction of stockpiles, in the demining of land, and in the reduction of casualties from landmine explosions, as reported to the Second Meeting of States Parties to the Ottawa Convention, held in Geneva last month. We consider this an encouraging indication of Member States' commitment to full implementation of the Convention, made all the more worthy because of the overwhelming benefit to civilian populations that is reaped. We continue to call for more assistance to those States addressing the difficult task of demining, and for support for victims of landmine explosions.

The positive outcome of the NPT Review Conference has provided the flagging nuclear non-proliferation process with a fresh point of departure, which we hope will lead to constructive engagement on the crucial issues on the disarmament agenda. We continue to underscore the importance of the universality of the NPT, and the need for early ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). We look forward to the start of negotiations on a fissile materials cut-off treaty in the Conference on Disarmament next year. We will also wait to see whether there are other dividends to be gained through the implementation of interim confidence-building measures on the part of nuclear-weapon States, such as the de-alerting of nuclear warheads, the adoption of legally binding commitments on negative security assurances for non-nuclear-weapon States, and the ceding of the right to first use of nuclear weapons.

The CARICOM States consider particularly important the conclusions and recommendations of the NPT Review Conference regarding the strengthening of measures and international regulations to protect States from the risks associated with the maritime transportation of radioactive material. Our concerns regarding the threat to our subregional marine environment posed by the trans-shipment of irradiated reactor fuel through the Caribbean Sea are very well known. We continue to call for the cessation of this practice. This position notwithstanding, we reiterate the need for the international community to consider the establishment of a comprehensive regulatory framework promoting greater State responsibility in such areas as disclosure, liability and compensation in relation to accidents.

The CARICOM States continue to support the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. We share the view that it would make a valuable contribution towards ensuring transparency in the consultative process for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament. We believe it would also promote confidence-building and strengthen the role of the United Nations in such areas as verification and compliance. We therefore encourage renewed consideration within the Disarmament Commission of the convening of a fourth special session devoted to disarmament.

The CARICOM States also recognize the important contribution of nuclear-weapon-free zones to strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime and promoting regional security and stability. We maintain that their success is to be found in their establishment on the basis of agreements freely reached among the States of the regions concerned. We remain committed to the regime established by the Treaty of Tlatelolco, to which we are party, and encourage the development of mechanisms aimed at promoting cooperation among zones with a view to strengthening the international nuclear non-proliferation regime.

The tenor of our debate has been set by the NPT Review Conference and the Millennium Summit. We find ourselves with a fortuitous opportunity to redirect our dialogue and to jump-start our negotiations to make meaningful progress on the disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation agenda — if only we would find the political will to do so. Let us not squander this important opportunity.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.